

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) A connecting means adapted to releasably fix a first element and a second element, the connecting means comprising a locking means movable in a deformable channel by remote activation means between a locked position in which the first element is locked to the second element and an unlocked position in which the first element is released from the second element, wherein there is no [permanent] material connection made between the connecting means and the remote activation means and wherein in the locked position the channel is substantially undeformed in the region of the locking means and the locking means prevents deformation of the channel in that region.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, wherein the locking means is a locking pin, the channel has a base and deformable sides, and the locking pin is adapted to be moved within the channel by the remote activation means towards or away from the base.

Claim 3 (Withdrawn) The connecting means of claim 1, wherein the locking means is rotatable between a locked position and an unlocked position.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 2, wherein the locking pin, the sides of the channel and the base are of indefinite length.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 2, wherein there are two locking pins, each disposed in a channel with a base and deformable sides.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 4, wherein the connecting means is flexible.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, wherein the connecting means provides for adjustment of the first element relatively to the second element in one, two or three dimensions.

Claim 8 (Withdrawn) The connecting means of claim 1, wherein the connecting means provides for rotational adjustment of the first element relatively to the second element.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, wherein the remote activation means is adapted to move the locking means by the use of energy selected from the group consisting of magnetic force, electromagnetic force, electromagnetic induction, high frequency heating and radio waves.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, which further comprises signal means adapted to indicate whether the first element is locked to the second element.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, which further comprises signal means adapted to indicate whether the first element is released from the second element.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, which further comprises means for reporting damage or stress caused to the connecting means.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, which further comprises encryption.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended) A method of releasably fixing a first element and a second element via a connecting means, the method comprising the step of applying remote activation means to fix the first element to the second element, the connecting means comprising a locking means movable in a deformable channel by remote activation means to a locked position in which the first element is fixed to the second element, wherein the locking means is movable by the or another remote activation means to an unlocked position in which the first element is released from the second element, there being no [permanent] material connection made between the remote activation means and the connecting means and wherein in the locked position the channel is substantially undeformed in the region of the locking means and the locking means prevents deformation of the channel in that region.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the first element is aligned with the second element before the remote activating means is applied to fix the first element to the second element.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein movement of the locking means to the locked position or to the unlocked position causes no mark on or damage to the first element or the second element.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the first element is fixed to more than one second element.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the second element is fixed to more than one first element.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein a plurality of first elements is fixed to a plurality of second elements.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17, wherein the second elements are not identical.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18, wherein the first elements are not identical.

Claim 22 (Withdrawn) The method of claim 14, wherein the connecting means includes a female connector attached to the first element and a male connector, adapted to cooperate with a female connector, attached to the second element.

Claim 23 (Withdrawn) The method of claim 14, which includes the subsequent step of applying the or another remote activation means to release the first element from the second element.

Claim 24 (Withdrawn) The connecting means of claim 1 which includes first attachment means adapted to attach the connecting means to the first element.

Claim 25 (Withdrawn) A panel and connecting means combination, the connecting means being as claimed in claim 24, the panel representing the first element and having a pair of opposed faces and a plurality of edges, wherein the panel has second attachment means adapted to cooperate with the first attachment means to facilitate attachment of the panel with the connecting means.

Claim 26 (Withdrawn) The panel and connecting means combination of claim 25, wherein the first attachment means is a tongue and the second attachment means is a groove formed in an edge of the panel.

Claim 27 (Withdrawn) A method of fixing a first element and a second element via a connecting means, the method including the steps of:

(a) locating the first element relatively to the second element in a chosen position;

(b) maintaining the chosen position by magnetic force; and

(c) applying remote activation means comprising radio frequency heating means to the connecting means inserted between the first and second elements, the connecting means being adhesive curable by radio frequency heating.

Claim 28 (Withdrawn) The method of claim 27, wherein the first element is a metal stud and the second element is one or more panels.

Claim 29 (Withdrawn) The method of claim 27, which includes the further step of releasing the magnetic force after cure of the adhesive.

Claim 30 (Withdrawn) A connecting means adapted to adjust the location of a first element relatively to a second element spaced from the first element, the connecting means including an arm extending through the space between the first element and the second element and being pivotally attached to the first element at a first attachment point and to the second element by a second attachment point, characterized in that the arm is adapted to pivot at the first and second attachment points, thereby reducing the space between the first and second elements, upon

application of remote activation means and further characterized in that there is no permanent material connection (as herein defined) between the connecting means and the remote activation means.

Claim 31 (Withdrawn) A method of adjusting the location of a first element relatively to a second element spaced from the first element, the method including the step of applying remote activation means to cause a connecting means as claimed in claim 30 to reduce the space between the first and second elements.

Claim 32 (Withdrawn) A method of adjusting the location of a first element relatively to a second element spaced from the first element, the method including the step of applying remote activation means to cause a plurality of connecting means, each as claimed in claim 30, to reduce the space between the first and second elements.

Claim 33 (Withdrawn) A first panel adapted for releasable connection to a second panel by a connecting means, the connecting means including a locking means, the locking means movable by remote activation means between a locked position in which the first panel is locked to the second panel and an unlocked position in which the first panel is released from the second panel, there being no permanent material connection (as herein defined) between the connecting means and the remote activation means, wherein each panel having a pair of opposed faces, the first panel having on one face a plurality of rows of protrusions adapted to be received in a set of recesses arranged in a plurality of rows on one face of the second panel.

Claim 34 (Withdrawn) The first panel of claim 33, wherein the protrusions are nodules and the recesses are pits.

Claim 35 (Withdrawn) A first panel adapted for releasable connection to a second panel by a first panel adapted for releasable connection to a second panel by a connecting means, the connecting means including a locking means movable by remote activation means between a locked position in which the first panel is locked to the second panel and unlocked position in which the first panel is released from the second panel, there being no permanent material connection (as herein defined) between the connecting means and the remote activation means, wherein each panel has

a pair of opposed faces, the first panel having on one face a plurality of protrusions being ribs, adapted to be received in recesses being channels on one face of the second panel.

Claim 36 (Cancelled)

Claims 37 (Withdrawn) A method of manufacturing an element which is intended for connection with a second element, the first element incorporating first means to facilitate the steps of depositing discrete amounts of settable material on surface of the element and rotating the element through 180° to permit the material to set under the influence of gravity.

Claims 38 (Withdrawn) The method of claim 37, wherein the material is further treated to effect setting.

Claim 39 (Cancelled)

Claim 40 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, wherein the connecting means is capable of providing a report relating to one or more of the following:

- a) whether the first element is fixed to the second element;
- b) whether the first element is released from the second element;
- c) whether the connecting means has been damaged.

Claims 41-44 (Cancelled)

Claim 45 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, wherein the locking means is a locking pin and the channel is tubular.

Claim 46 (Previously Presented) the connecting means of claim 2, wherein the channel has an external protrusion adapted to lock into a recess when in the locked position.

Claim 47 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, which is a clip, a bolt or a strip connector.

Claim 48 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, when attached to or inserted in the first or second element.

Claim 49 (Previously Presented) A plurality of the connecting means of claim 1 when adapted to be fixed or released in a predetermined sequence.

Claim 50 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, wherein the locking means is adapted to move in a linear path between the locked position and the unlocked position.

Claim 51 (Previously Presented) The connecting means of claim 1, wherein the first element and the second element form an assembly.

Claim 52 (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 51, wherein the first element is selected from the group consisting of a plug for a power cable, glass, Perspex, an item of computer hardware, a telephone, an item of furniture, an electrical appliance, a bicycle, an item of photographic equipment, a burglar alarm, an automotive accessory, trim, an automobile, a casing for a black box recording device, a frame, a billboard, an item of footwear excluding a sole, a boot, a dispenser, a carpet, a rug, a part of an item of luggage, an item of cladding, an item of decoration, a medicine cabinet, a gate, a door, a coin-operated machine, a tooth brace, a denture, a false tooth, a part of a dog collar, a mobile phone, a tool, a computer, an item of street furniture, a building, and a pipe.

Claim 53 (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 51, wherein the second element is selected from the group consisting of a power socket, a backing board, a cable, a wall, a floor, a ceiling, an item of furniture, a saddle bag, a tripod, a lens, a lens cap, a casing for a burglar alarm, an automobile, and automobile door, a bonnet, a boot lid, an access panel for a black box, a sound proofing panel, a billboard support, a sole for footwear, a ski, an access panel for a dispenser, a part of an item of luggage, a building, a door for a medicine cabinet, a gate, a door jamb, an access door for a coin-operated machine, a tooth, a jaw, a part of a dog collar, a battery, an access card, a tool bit, a computer peripheral, a street, a door, a window, and a pipe.

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-2, 4-7, 9-21, 40, and 45-53 are pending in the application. Applicant thanks the Examiner for noting that claims 12 and 13 are allowable. Applicant respectfully notes that the text of claim 1 as presented in the body of the previous Amendment was incomplete. However, the text of claim 1 was correctly stated in the Marked-Up Copy of Amendments to the Claims, as well as in the Clean copy of Pending Claims. Applicant herein amends claims 1 and 14. The amendments do not substantially alter the scope of the claims. No new matter is added. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

I. Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §102

A. Claims 1, 2, 4-7, 11, 40, and 45-53

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 4-7, 11, 40, and 45-53 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) “as being anticipated by Walburn et al. U.S. Patent No. 4,728,217.” Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Applicant respectfully notes that the ‘217 patent is to Fink et al., which was cited in the previous Office Action, and not Walburn et al. However, Applicant believes that, in the present Office Action, the Examiner is citing to U.S. Patent No. 5,241,451 (Walburn et al.), as the references to the specification and figures in the Office Action match the Walburn et al. ‘451 patent and not the Fink et al. ‘217 patent. Therefore, all remarks below will be made with respect to Walburn et al.

Claim 1 states in combination:

A connecting means adapted to releasably fix a first element and a second element, the connecting means comprising a locking means movable in a deformable channel by remote activation means between a locked position in which the first element is locked to the second element and an unlocked position in which the first element is released from the second element, wherein there is no material connection made between the connecting means and the remote activation means and wherein in the locked position the channel is substantially undeformed in the region of the locking

means and the locking means prevents deformation of the channel in that region.

The Examiner asserts that Walburn et al. discloses a remote activation means and a locking means, which is movable by the or another remote activation means to an unlocked position, citing to col. 5, lines 28-45 of Walburn et al (“a tool (no[t] shown”). However, neither the cited language nor any other section of Walburn et al. discloses, for example, a “connecting means comprising a locking means movable in a deformable channel by remote activation means... wherein there is no material connection made between the connecting means and the remote activation means,” as is recited by claim 1 in combination with the remaining elements when claim 1 is interpreted as a whole. (Emphasis added.)

The present application explains that the term “material connection” refers to “a connection that has physical substance, *i.e.*, substance made of matter, and excludes a connection made through energy.” (Application, p. 2, line 40, to p. 3, line 2.) The cited section of Walburn et al. discloses “a tool (no[t] shown) [that] may be inserted into the access opening 42 and beneath the enlarged head 38 of the plunger 35 to lift the plunger 35 out of the molded connector housing 10.” (Emphasis added.) As this language makes clear, the locking mechanism in Walburn et al. can only be moved by causing the tool to make direct physical contact with the locking mechanism, which by definition is not utilizing “remote activation means.” No other means of activating or deactivating the locking mechanism of Walburn et al. is disclosed in that reference.

By contrast, the present application discloses that the locking mechanism can be moved (or activated) using various energy means, *e.g.*, magnetic force and radio waves sent to an aerial in the locking pin. (Application, p. 16, lines 19, and 29-30.)

As the combination of elements of claim 1 are not disclosed by Walburn et al., Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection with respect to claim 1 and its dependent claims 2, 4-7, 11, 40, and 45-53, which incorporate all of the features of claim 1.

B. Claims 14-21

The Examiner has rejected claims 14-21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Walburn et al. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 14 states in combination:

A method of releasably fixing a first element and a second element via a connecting means, the method comprising the step of applying remote activation means to fix the first element to the second element, the connecting means comprising a locking means movable in a deformable channel by remote activation means to a locked position in which the first element is fixed to the second element, wherein the locking means is movable by the or another remote activation means to an unlocked position in which the first element is released from the second element, there being no material connection made between the remote activation means and the connecting means and wherein in the locked position the channel is substantially undeformed in the region of the locking means and the locking means prevents deformation of the channel in that region.

As discussed with respect to claim 1, Walburn et al. does not disclose, for example, a “method of releasably fixing a first element and a second element via a connecting means, the method comprising the step of applying remote activation means to fix the first element to the second element, the connecting means comprising a locking means movable in a deformable channel by remote activation... there being no material connection made between the remote activation means and the connecting means,” as is recited by claim 14. (Emphasis added.) Walburn et al. does not disclose a connection that does not have “physical substance.”

As the combination of elements of claim 14 are not disclosed by Walburn et al., Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection with respect to claim 14 and its dependent claims 15-21, which incorporate all of the features of claim 14.

II. Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner rejects claim 9 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Walburn et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,499,907 (Baur). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Applicant respectfully submits that Baur is not available as a prior art reference under any provision or §102, and in particular, §102(e). “A U.S. patent reference is effective prior art as of its U.S. filing date...applicant may be able to overcome the 35 U.S.C. 102(e) rejection by proving he or she is entitled to his or her own 35 U.S.C. 119 priority date which is earlier than the reference’s U.S. filing date.” MPEP 2136.03 (citing to, *In re Hilmer*, 359 F.2d 859, 149 USPQ 480 (CCPA 1966)). The U.S. filing date of the Baur reference is August 18, 2000. The earliest priority date of the present application is the filing date of the original Australian application on March 18, 1998. Therefore, the Baur reference is not prior art to the present application under 35 U.S.C. §102.

As the Examiner does not state that Walburn et al. can be used alone under §102 or modified under §103 to anticipate claim 9 or to render claim 9 obvious, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection with respect to claim 9.